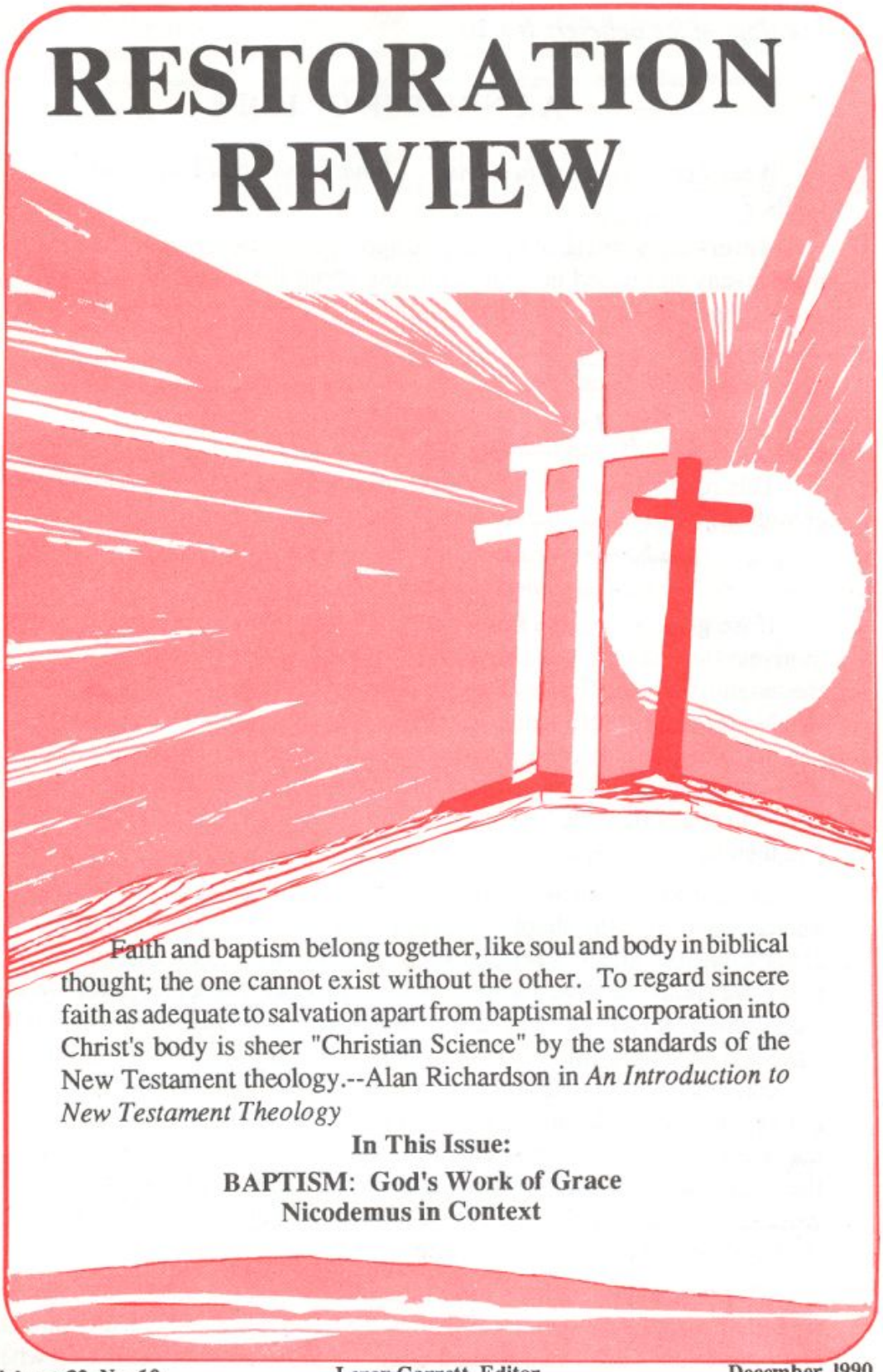
RESTORATION REVIEW



Faith and baptism belong together, like soul and body in biblical thought; the one cannot exist without the other. To regard sincere faith as adequate to salvation apart from baptismal incorporation into Christ's body is sheer "Christian Science" by the standards of the New Testament theology.--Alan Richardson in *An Introduction to New Testament Theology*

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The Hope of the Believer … No. 20

A UNIVERSE OF HOPE

When I consider Your heavens … What is man that You are mindful of him? —Ps.8

If ever the psalmist David was an inspired poet it was that night he contemplated the heavens and ended up philosophizing about the nature of humanity. As he studied the magnificence of heaven and of all creation he was led to cry out, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth."

> *When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers.*
> *The moon and the stars, which you have ordained*
>
> *What is man that You are mindful of him.*

This rendezvous with the star-studded heavens led David to write the most complimentary lines on human nature found anywhere in the Bible:

> *You have made him a little lower than the angels.*
>
> *You have crowned him with glory and honor.*

If we get nothing else from David's sharing this experience, we ought to be motivated to look up to the stars more often and marvel over both the immensity and the magnificence of God's creation. The poet had a point who prayed that God would make him a child again if but for a night. If with child-like wonder we could peer into the heavenly canopy and again be awed by the likes of the North Star and the Milky Way, we might be more inclined to accept life as the mystery that it is. How can one ponder the fact that there are 100 billion suns and stars in our galaxy and then fret over a few inconveniences.

The universe is not just immense. It is incomprehensible in its immensity. One nuclear scientist really shook me up some years ago in a speech at a college where I taught when he said, in an effort to get our attention as to how expansive things are, that if we should be tossed at random into space we might search for the earth for a thousand years and never be able to find it, even if we had a space ship that could travel as fast as light! Since he was from Cal Tech and involved in nuclear research, we were not inclined to dismiss what he had to say, not even when he told us, "In our ventures into outer space we're not going anywhere, not even if we somehow managed to reach the nearest star." He went on to

illustrate: Even if we stood on the nearest star and looked out on the universe, what we would see of the universe would be comparable to what we see of our world by looking out the windows of the building in which we were sitting!

That was enough to keep me a little humbler for a number of years. But just recently I read the following paragraph, based on more recent astronomical data, and I must admit that I find it mind-boggling to the point of being overwhelmed:

> The earth is traveling 67,000 miles per hour in its annual journey around the sun. The Milky Way galaxy speeds along at 1.3 million miles per hour, propelled farther into an expanding cosmos. Every four seconds the universe adds to itself a volume equivalent in size to the Milky Way!

If there are billions of suns in the Milky Way, and the mass of all these is doubled every four seconds, then every 24 hours we have the equivalent of thousands of billions of Milky Ways added to our expanding universe. I simply cannot handle such baming data. I am stunned by it all and can only ask, *What* is *God up to?*

That planet earth gets lost in all this is dramatically evident. Our own little solar system, which is only an infinitesimal part of the universe, has but one star (the sun), eight planets, 32 moons, about 50,000 asteroids, millions of meteorites, and 100 billion comets. The earth itself, as one of the planets, is such a small part of the whole that it can barely be counted. In fact the sun takes up 99.86% of our solar system's substance. The earth amounts to only .0014%!

If David had such data at hand (Like all other ancients he probably believed that the earth was the center of the universe), he could have added to his soliloquizing, *And how could You be so concerned for planet earth?* And the psalmist would have been as dazzled as we should be that this incomprehensible universe functions with such uniformity and precision as to be likened to a timepiece. It makes one sound a bit ridiculous to suggest that it all came about by a Big Bang especially when he has no answer as to where the Big Bang came from!

It is a tantalizing question as to whether there is life, especially intelligent life, in other parts of the universe. One American physicist, Harrison Brown, estimates that there are a billion billion stars in the "visible universe" —that can be seen by our most powerful telescopes —and that many of these have planets orbiting them, some of which, judging by our own planetary system, might be inhabited by living things. Indeed, if we find life of

some sort on Mars, which is altogether possible, Brown says “the likelihood would be high” that there are as many as a thousand billion planets in our visible universe with some kind of life on them.

It is understandable that an inquiring mind like Alexander Campbell would theorize that Jupiter (or some such planet) was inhabited with people. He is an example of how curious human kind has been about the possibility of other worlds similar to our own. But Brown says that Jupiter is too large to sustain life, just as Mercury is too small —and Neptune is too cold and Mercury too hot. Mars and Venus aside (which might sustain life), if in our system we have one planet (Earth) that is inhabited, is it not likely that out of all the billions of other solar systems there would be many that would be inhabited?

Who knows but what there are civilizations out in the vast expanses of the universe that are far in advance of our own? And might there be worlds inhabited by unfallen creatures? Or did Christ also visit other planets to give himself as a sacrifice for sin? Might other worlds be engaged in work far different from our own, even beyond our comprehension? How would it affect you if we should make contact with beings from outer space?

While there is of course much to wonder about in such matters, there are some things that we know, such as that on planet Earth we are hardly more than a speck in the universe. And as Christians we believe that God is the creator of all the universe. He made everyone of those billion billion stars and placed those millions of planets into orbit. We also believe that God does not act arbitrarily, and so there is purpose in all that he does. We may not know the purpose, but the purpose is there. And we believe that God is in control!

It is my opinion that the vast, immeasurable universe is related to God’s eternal purpose for his creation. I see planet Earth as a kind of boot camp or training station, and there may be innumerable such training space ships. We are being made ready for service in another world, perhaps millions of worlds, in the far reaches of the universe. Like angels, we will be able to move from one part of the heavens to another in the blink of an eye. When Alexander Campbell lost his precocious and deeply spiritual 12-year old son in a freak water accident, he wrote to a friend back in Ireland that God must have had need of him in some distant part of his creation. That fits with what I see as part of God’s eternal purpose for all these things.

But I am willing to settle for the way the apostle Paul put it when he pondered the mysteries of God: “Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! (Ro. 11:33). I can also Identify with him when he talks about how our sufferings in this world in no way compare with “the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Ro. 8:18).

One wonders how any scientist who studies the universe can be an atheist. Einstein himself wondered that, and he doubted if there were any such atheists. He wrote in *The World As I See It*, “You will hardly find one among the profounder sort of scientific minds without a peculiar religious feeling of his own.” He goes on to say that the scientist’s religious feeling takes the form of “a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law.” He also says that the natural order reveals an intelligence that reduces all human thinking to utterly insignificant reflection. He added that the scientist’s religious experience in probing the universe is closely akin to that of the religious geniuses of all ages.

You didn’t realize that Albert Einstein, the profoundest of all scientists, was a preacher, did you? He is saying that you can’t help but preach if you seriously rendezvous with the stars.

Einstein uses the words that say it all, *rapturous amazement.* It is that kind of awe that is crucial for the living of these days. How can we be rapturously amazed and live irreverently or indifferently? How can we look at the stars and be petty or peevish? How can we be awed by the heavens and yet be vindictive?

The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard was awed in a way different from Einstein. He saw an “unbridgeable gulf’ between the Creator of the universe and his creation, and it is this alienation that causes our despair. This is an understandable reaction to a baffling and incomprehensible universe. How could such a God have any concern for mortal man?, one could justifiably ask. We can rightly think, of such a Creator as unapproachable. Even the Bible uses that terminology —“He dwells in unapproachable light” (1 Tim. 6:16). Yes, of course! One who ordered a billion universes into existence would be unapproachable to such creatures as ourselves.

Praise God that we can conclude with what must be one of the greatest truths of all Scripture, and it is couched in one little word, *access.* It is in Christ that the unapproachable God has given us access unto himself. The apostle says it in Ro. 5:2: “through whom also we have access by faith into this grace.” The unapproachable God

made himself approachable in the person of Jesus Christ, for "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself' (2 Cor. 5:19). When human eyes saw him they "beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14).

This makes Jesus Christ, who bore the very image of God, a universe unto himself, even more glorious, more magnificent, and more incomprehensible than the starry heavens above. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift! —*the Editor*

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"OWE NO ONE ANYTHING" DOES THIS APPLY TO CHURCHES TOO?

Owe no one anything! (Rom. 13:8)

It is one of those injunctions in Scripture that has a bite to it. In our debt-laden society such advice seems stodgy and old-fashioned, something you would expect grandma to say. One might be tempted to argue it is not really a mandate from God but something an ancient Jew would say out of the culture of his own times. Who in the real world of "plastic credit card" America can take seriously the notion of living debt-free? Whatever the reason, there are few of us who take that passage seriously, however inspired we may believe it to be. It is odd how we can be selective when it comes to the Bible, accepting some things with rigid compliance while ignoring others with reckless abandon.

I see in Paul's apostolic advice a sound economic principle, for nations as well as families and individuals (and churches!). It is something I have always believed and practiced, even in my youth and long before I realized it was in the Bible. Staying out of debt has made me a freer and happier person all these years, but it is a difficult lesson to teach others, even one's own children. I conclude that the apostle's admonition is not true because it is in the Bible, but it is in the Bible because it is true. Getting what one wants (rather than what one really needs) through debt making has always been morally suspect, even from the foundation of the world, just as stealing has always been wrong. Stealing is not wrong because the Bible forbids it but the Bible forbids it because it is wrong. And borrowing what one may not be able to repay is akin to stealing.

Why does not "Owe no one anything" also apply to churches? The church press these days has numerous news items of churches that are overwhelmed in debt, some of them even to the point of bankruptcy, and these include Churches of Christ. Some churches are millions of dollars in debt! And to whom do they owe this money? The bondholders are often the aged, the retired, and the widows who supposed they could help the church with

their investment money. Some of our big churches who owe millions are now asking those who trusted them with their savings to either forgive the debt or the interest or to wait for payment.

This letter from a woman in Texas that appeared in a Church of Christ newspaper should serve to remind us of the wisdom of churches staying out of debt like the Bible teaches:

> I am a 73-year old widow. I read about Richland Hill's debt. I have my life's savings in bonds in that church and I haven't received a penny of interest since May of 1989. I only draw Social Security. I use the interest to pay my insurance and repairs on my home. I may have to sell my home. I have written them and called them, and they just aren't interested in my situation. How can they help the poor and do all that they are doing while owing people like me. I have lost sleep over this. At my age I need the money now, not when I am dead and gone.

The woman's plea is persuasive. How can a church with good conscience and a sense of justice go right on spending money as usual, including large salaries for their staff, while owing widows who trusted them with their savings?

While the Texas sister spoke her mind, it was a Tennessee brother that really laid it on the same church. Here is his letter in the same publication:

> The honest and heartfelt course for the Richland Hills church is to fire its huge staff and use its weekly income to pay its honest debts, and after its debts are paid, to resume its elaborate programs. I know of no other Christian course. I do not know of any rational reason why I at nearly 87 should be denied the income from my lifetime savings.

I should think it would be embarrassing for staff people of a church to go on receiving their checks at the expense of widows and retired folk. Such embarrassment could be avoided if our leadership would adopt a pay-as-you-go policy as the Bible directs. Our elders are often chosen more because they are business men than spiritual leaders, but even so they often take chances (with other people's money!) in church business that they wouldn't take in their own business. Just as there would be fewer wars if the kings who make them had to fight them, so there would be fewer churches in financial trouble if the leaders who make the debts had to be personally responsible for the debts.

We have ample evidence in the larger church world that a pay-as-you-go policy will work. You are not going to find a Seventh Day Adventist church in financial trouble, and they have a mission program in every country of the world. The Assemblies of God have baptized ten million in the past generation and established thousands of "base

communities" in South America, all without a debt problem. And when the Mormons build a new church, or even an elaborate temple, it is paid for before the first brick is laid!

Even among Churches of Christ there is the Boston church that now has "plantings" on every continent and most major cities of the world, with tens of thousands of baptisms (All in just eleven years!), and they don't owe a dime on a single facility —because they don't own any facilities! They are the one group among us like the New Testament churches in this respect. You have heard that we are "restoring the New Testament church," haven't you? We are supposed to believe that we are doing this when we build edifices and sanctuaries that run into the millions. And then can't pay for them!

If it is the primitive church that is our model, it is far more likely that it would have gone into debt to care for the needy than for imprisoning itself in a building. And prisons they often are. When a Boston church outgrows its rented facility, it simply rents a larger one. No sweat.

Owe no one anything. Is that inspired Scripture? Is it the word of God? What should it mean to us as a nation that has to measure its indebtedness not in the billions but the trillions? What should it means to us as individuals who go into debt not for what we need but for what we want? What should it mean to churches that tear down one "barn" to build a bigger one without ever getting one paid for?

But that is not all the apostle said in that passage that reads, "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."

So, I close recognizing that there is one debt we all owe and can never pay, however much we try, and we should keep trying. We love because God first loved us. Love is the debt we can never pay. And what a glorious debt it is! It is the inglorious debts that we can and must pay. And then stay out of debt like the Bible says. —*the Editor*

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Toward A Theology of Baptism …

BAPTISM: GOD'S WORK OF GRACE

John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. —Mk. 1:4

I should like for this article to be one of many among the heirs of the Stone-Campbell Movement in an effort to rethink our position on baptism, and so I entitle it in part "Toward a Theology of Baptism." We must concede at the outset that we have never had anyone position on baptism but several positions. Even our founding pioneers, particularly

Stone and Campbell, never completely agreed on baptism, which is all the more reason why we should keep on studying the subject freely and objectively. It is a serious mistake to suppose that, after all these years, we have learned all that is to be known about the subject.

Stone and Campbell did agree on what I believe to be the most important description of baptism coming out of our heritage, and we have made that a part of our title also —"God's work of grace," which is a quotation from Campbell. That is the essence of what I believe our theology of baptism should be. It is God's work of grace. Baptism is not something that we do as much as it is something God does to us. Grace! That is what baptism is all about.

Baptism Unto Repentance

It is remarkable that as Mark writes his record of "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" he is hardly started before he tells of John the Baptist preparing the way for the Lord by preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. This is not the same as preaching repentance and baptism. It rather describes the nature of the baptism that John practiced. It was a baptism unto repentance or a baptism that initiated one into a new life. It might be rendered, "John preached a baptism that was unto a changed life." And so Mark also says, "and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins."

This is part of the new look that we must take of baptism —its relation to a new life, a changed life, to Christlikeness. Through the years we have taken an imbalanced view, seeing only or mostly what we choose to call the "mode" and "design" of baptism. It is by immersion (the mode) and it is for the remission of sins (the design). These aspects of baptism are easily debated, we suppose, and we have always felt secure in defending our position in these respects. But these are but part of what baptism is about. If all these years our emphasis had been where John's was, as he introduced the kingdom of God, and people had joined us "confessing their sins" and resolving to live changed lives, we would have had far fewer debates.

Our pioneers were aware of this emphasis, but, unfortunately it was not the emphasis that we picked up on. Alexander Campbell, for instance, in a short piece on "True Baptism" wrote as follows:

> Brother, are you a husband and the head of a family? Do you daily and constantly read the scriptures and pray in your family? Do you bring up your children in the correction, instruction, and admonition of the Lord? Are you spiritually-minded, and rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God? Do you often meditate, and carefully examine

> yourself? Have you your behavior without covetousness, and are you intent on making your calling and election sure? If so, baptism verily profiteth you; if not, it is no better than baby sprinkling? *(Mill. Harb.,* 1840, p. 570)

Campbell, who stood up in debates for the cause of immersion for the remission of sins, is saying that baptism is not *true* just because its mode and design are right. It must be a baptism unto repentance. If it was true of John's baptism it would be no less the case of baptism in the name of Christ.

How Baptism Saves

There is some sense in which baptism saves or an apostle would never have written, "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you" (1 Pet. 3:21). Peter refers to the antitype of Noah's flood "in which a few, that is eight persons, were saved through water." In reading the story of the flood one would not think of the survivors being saved by water. By the ark, yes; even by Noah and certainly by God. But by water? It is not in the Genesis account that they were saved by water, but only in Peter. He gives the story that twist so as to make a point about baptism. Exactly what is the point?

The apostle is careful to note that baptism is not "a removal of dirt from the body," which means there is no inherent power within the water itself. Even if a detergent were added to the water it would not and could not wash away any impurity of the soul. Baptism is not taking a bath, nor is any sin removed by the physical properties themselves. While water is involved and while water is essential to the baptismal act, it is not the act of ceremonial washing that saves.

It is in such a context as this that we might find the basic principle of baptism, and sure enough it is stated in that pungent line, "baptism is an appeal to God for a clear conscience," and he adds "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." This connects baptism (our resurrection) to the resurrection of Christ.

We are on our way toward a responsible theology of baptism when we see it as "the appeal made to God by a good conscience," as the New English Bible puts it, or "a pledge made to God from a good conscience," as the Jerusalem Bible has it. Or it is simply "the answer of a good conscience" as the King James renders it.

This means that in being baptized we manifest our sincerity before God. Just as a child shows loyalty to a parent by doing the parent's will, so we show a submissive spirit to God when we obey him in baptism. In the ordinance of baptism he gives us something to do to show that we love and honor him, a way for our good conscience to "answer" God's call of grace. This is how baptism saves us, and it shows that baptism is not our work but the

work of God's grace. God works in us through baptism as evidence that we have an unfeigned faith and a sincere conscience.

Baptism As the Sign and Seal of Regeneration

This is a quotation from the Westminster Confession, and if this is what our religious neighbors are supposed to believe about baptism, that it is "a sign and seal of regeneration," there has been no need for debate. We only need to show them what their own creed testifies to.

This is the only theology of baptism that we need, though we might clothe it in biblical language: "When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:4-5).

From the early days of our Movement we have erred in leaving the impression that baptism is regeneration. Campbell was visited in his latter years by one of his critics who urged him to correct while he yet lived a misconception widely held by Campbell's followers, that baptism is regeneration. On that occasion Campbell made it clear that he had never taught that baptism is regeneration but rather "the laver of regeneration" as the Scriptures say. He went on to say that baptism is the consummation of the regeneratiive process which begins with faith and repentance and includes being "born of the Spirit."

It would have served Campbell well to have quoted his critic's own creed, the Westminster Confession, that baptism is the sign and seal of regeneration. It would be difficult to find a more meaningful description of baptism than those words convey. If people would only believe what they put into their creeds!

When we make baptism itself regeneration we presume to say that baptism is absolutely essential and there is no way to be saved and go to heaven without it, which is to go too far. If one dies while being regenerated, as a believing penitent, it would be worse than legalistic to say that he would be lost because his regeneration was not stamped and sealed by baptism. Another way to put it is that the new life in Christ does not begin at birth (baptism) but when one is begotten of the word and becomes a believer. There are two extremes to be avoided, one is to make baptism everything, the other is to make it nothing. But we are on target in following the Westminster divines and our own pioneers, as well as the apostle Paul, when we see baptism as "the laver" of regeneration or its "sign and seal."

Baptism Means Identification With Christ

No passage about baptism is more pregnant with meaning than Gal. 3:27: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” The metaphor of putting Christ on as one would put on a garment means that he becomes part of us and we become pan of him. It is like the hot poker —the poker is in the fire and the fire is in the poker. We become one with Christ in baptism; we are identified with him.

While the church through the centuries has used the trinitarian formula (Mt. 28:19) in baptism, it is noteworthy that in Acts believers were always “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” The significance here is that to be baptized in someone’s name is to become identified with that person. Paul, for instance, complained to the Corinthians for saying they belonged to Paul, and so he asked, “Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:13). So, in being baptized in the name of Christ we become identified with him. It is a sign and a seal that we belong to him. How beautiful!

We will improve our theology of baptism by restoring the significance of “in the name of Jesus Christ” as it was used in the founding years of the Christian church. Baptism takes on tremendous significance when it is realized that in that ordinance we are identified as belonging to Christ.

We would do well to change our baptismal formula to something like this: “I baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, into (not *in* !) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The “into” *(eis* is wrongly translated *in*) in Mt. 28:19 also shows identification in that we are baptized into a relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The “in” (epi) is also in Acts 2:38: “be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ,” which suggests, as throughout Acts, that in baptism one becomes identified with Christ or belongs to Christ. In the same passage baptism is referred to as “for (eis) the remission of sins.” As in the case of the Bible saying that baptism saves, we can only conclude from Acts 2:38 that baptism is for the remission of sins at least in some sense. Not in every sense, for we know that Christ’s death was for the remission of our sins, but in some sense. I will again follow Campbell here and say that we cannot make Acts 2:38 mean that baptism procures pardon or remission, but that it certifies that we are pardoned.

Again, it is a sign or an assurance that God has forgiven us. We can know that we have forgiveness when we submit to the act that God has ordained as a pardon assuring ordinance. Campbell said baptism is like a road sign. We know when we enter Ohio because the road sign assures us that we have, and so we know we have the forgiveness of

sins because we have been baptized. Campbell thus defended himself against those "who have given to baptism and undue eminence —a sort of pardon-procuring, rather than a pardon-certifying and enjoying efficacy" *(Mill. H arb.,* 1840, p. 545).

This view of baptism was good news on the American frontier where so many people, due to the extravagances of Calvinism, had no way of being sure of their salvation. Campbell taught that there is an "enjoying efficacy" to baptism in that it is the sign whereby one can know that God has saved him by grace. This is the enjoying efficacy that we see in Luther when he complained, "The pope can't talk about me like that, for I've been baptized just as he has." Luther knew where he stood because he had been baptized.

Baptism Is Incorporation In The Body of Christ

When one is "in Christ" he or she is in the Body of Christ. Baptism relates to both realities. We are "baptized into Christ" (Ro. 6:3), and we are "baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). Putting on Christ (Gal. 3:27) is being both in Christ and in the Body of Christ.

The exciting truths in Col. 2:12 ties all this together: "You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." The same "work of God" that raised up Jesus raises us up in baptism. This is baptism as God's work of grace. "Buried with Christ in baptism" is both to be identified with him and incorporated into his Body.

The apostle goes on to say in verse 19 that we are to hold fast the Head, from whom "the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God." He is of course talking about the church, the Body of Christ, made up of those who are incorporated in the Body by "the working of God" in baptism. Some Scriptures, therefore, show a very personal identity with Christ in baptism —Christ is in us and we are in Christ. Other Scriptures describe the believer as incorporated in the Body with other believers. It is of course both. One is in Christ, as if it were a fellowship between only two persons; and he or she is at the same time in the Body, in a fellowship with all others who are "knit together" and are growing with a growth that is from God. And baptism is the sign and seal of all this.

Perhaps all of this will bring us closer to seeing that when we talk about baptism we talk about grace. Baptism is no arbitrary command. It is related to the power of God and to the resurrection of Christ. It is God who acts in baptism more than ourselves. He extends the grace and we accept. This makes baptism God's work of grace. —*the Editor*

————————Campbell on Baptism————————

We do not place baptism amongst good works. In baptism we are passive in everything but in giving our consent. We are buried and we are raised by another. Hence in no view of baptism can it be called a good work.

It is a solemn pledge and a formal assurance on the part of the Father that he has forgiven all our offences. —*Mill Harb.* 1847, p. 250

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Heroes and Reformers of History … No. 10

COUNT ZINZENDORF: ECUMENICAL PIONEER

A Lutheran nobleman, Nikolaus Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf, who died in 1760, was a pioneer in Christian unity, and he was the first to use the term "ecumenical" in its modern sense. He early on discovered that only love can unite the fragmented children of God. He insisted that cooperation is not enough, for Christians must become one in heart. "Unity is always of the heart" he had a way of saying.

He was one of those few people that were religious all their lives, even from childhood. When but a boy he helped organize with others his age what they called the Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed. They pledged themselves to love all mankind and to do what they could to spread the gospel.

These youthful experiences presaged a life of devoted service to Christ and his church. Zinzendorf (The name is fun to pronounce!) became a man of many talents. Besides being a statesman, he was a pastor, teacher, theologian, missionary, hymn-writer, and liturgist. The last named is not usually counted as a gift, but in his case it was in that as a bishop in the Moravian church, which he helped found, he took public worship very seriously and created a liturgy that sought a balance between the intellectual and the emotional. He wanted worship sufficiently structured that it not be slipshod, and yet free enough not to be too rigid.

But even his liturgy reflected his passion for unity. His "Call to Worship" was "Unite the children of God that are scattered abroad, and bring them once together from the ends of the world." He wanted the Moravian Church to be "an ecumenical microcosm" in that it would both reflect the spirit of Christian unity and would set forth the principles by which

a united church could be realized. In this respect he was like some of the early leaders of the Stone-Campbell unity movement who wanted “this Reformation,” as they called it, to be a call for the unity of all Christians and not the creation of still one more sect.

While Zinzendorf was never other than religious, it was while he was on tour of Europe as a young man that he had an “experience” that turned his life in a different direction. In an art gallery he came upon Domenico Feti’s “Ecce Homo” (Behold the Man), which shows Christ wearing the crown of thorns. An inscription below the picture read, “All this I did for you. What are you doing for me?” While he was at that time destined for service in one of the German states, he was so moved by the painting that he offered himself to Christ’s service.

He helped start a network of Herrnhut (Lord’s Place), which were retreat centers for the Moravians, who were often persecuted for being dissidents from the state church and part of the radical Reformation. Once the Holy Spirit came upon the Herrnhut in a special way, he came to see that his mission was worldwide evangelism and that his missionary vision was to be realized through the Moravians, who came also to be called the Brethren.

Evangelism and ecumenicity! Zinzendorf came to believe that they were inseparable. We are to win sinners and then blend them. This was also the way to unite the divided church - unite them in evangelism! He liked to call his people “Christian ones,” which to him meant the true children of God who have a passion both for the souls of lost mankind and the unity of all believers.

He wrote 2,000 hymns which were eventually sung in 90 languages. A believer in the power of singing, he lamented the fact that there is more dogma in our singing than in our prose, and he sought greater spirituality. He saw singing as a means to unity. One of his hymns, “Christian Hearts in Love United” illustrates this:

Saviour, now for strength we plead,
In Thy love together banded,
To advance where thou dost lead,
Doing what thou hast commanded;
Heart and hand we pledge Thee here,

Give us grace to persevere.

Zinzendorf was the first ecumenical hymnologist. He collected hymns belonging to the church universal. His hymn writing and collecting grew out of his passion for unity. If believers can sing together in adoration of a common Savior, they are already in an important way united, he figured.

He may not have attained his goal of uniting Christians through evangelism, but his noble effort remains a glorious example. And the small denomination he helped found, rooted in a call for both spirituality and evangelism, is a testimonial to what a unity-conscious people can do for their own generation. In the eighteenth century the Moravians sent out hundreds of missionaries and inspired countless others. By 1740 they had sent missionaries to the Virgin Islands, Gold Coast, Surinam, Greenland, North America, and South Africa. Even though small in number, their self-sacrifice, commitment, and love are unequaled in the history of missions.

In this country the Moravians did a lot of work among the Indians. One historian estimates that because they were so Christlike in their dealings with their converts that they achieved more than all of the Protestant efforts before them. They would go anywhere and pay any price. In order to witness for Christ in the West Indies some Moravian missionaries actually sold themselves into slavery.

Zinzendorf and his tiny denomination, who were more interested in winning people to Christ and uniting them into a loving fellowship than in adding converts to their own roster, can well serve as the conscience of the modem church. The cruel irony is that such a deeply spiritual, missionary-conscious, and unity-loving people as the Moravians should work themselves into virtual extinction. While they live on to some degree in the modem Brethren groups, the Moravians may have proved themselves to be what Zinzendorf wanted, an ecumenical microcosm that was willing to be dissolved into the Body of Christ at large.

It is rare when any denomination takes the claims of Christian unity seriously, and yet one would suppose in view of our Lord’s prayer for the oneness of all who believe in him, that it would have high priority with any church. It is remarkable that Jesus, while on his way to the Cross, would pray for unity with such passion. And Jesus, like Zinzendorf after him, coupled the unity of believers with the evangelization of the world. Our Lord knew that a divided church could never win a lost world. “May they be one even as we are one,” he fervently prayed to the Father, “so that the world may believe that you sent me”

That great truth touched the heart and soul of Count Zinzendorf with such intensity that he was willing to give up being a Count and identify himself with a displaced and persecuted people who were willing to go to the ends of the world in order to win them and blend them for Christ’s sake. That should make him and them both heroes and examples in the ongoing history of the church, and especially to a people like ourselves who are supposed to be a unity-loving people. —*the Editor*

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NICODEMUS IN CONTEXT

Cecil Hook

After attempting to be "a teacher in Israel" for more than half a century, I finally considered the conversation of Nicodemus and Jesus in its context. And it has brought new meaning to me.

We who believe that baptism is essential and those who do not have turned to Jesus' statement to Nicodemus for support of our positions. We have generally approached John 3:1-15 to find the answer to "What must I do to be saved?" while ignoring the context. While admitting that Jesus' statements ultimately relate to salvation let us look to learn more completely what he and Nicodemus were talking about.

John the Baptist had come announcing that the kingdom of God was near. He called for repentance and baptism as a public commitment *to* that kingdom even though he did *not* call it a new birth. Although baptism comes to us suddenly without explanation in John's ministry, historians tell us that the Jews were familiar with baptism. We are told that Gentiles who became Jewish proselytes made their commitment known publicly by a ceremony of baptism. Baptism signified their entrance into the hopes and claims of fleshly, national Israel.

While John proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom, he also pointed to the one who would come after him. John then identified Jesus as the Lamb of God. Andrew went to Peter and exclaimed, "We have found the Messiah!" Philip declared that they had found the one whom Moses and the prophets wrote about. And Nathanael answered Jesus, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Word gets around. A devout ruler named Nicodemus hears these rumors about the Messiah, the king, and the kingdom. He decides to check them out. He comes to Jesus with thoughts of cashing in on his birthright as a Jew which would entitle him to all the benefits, promises, and prerogatives of the restored kingdom. As a ruler he would have special interest because he might be given some seat of power in the restored kingdom.

The recorded conversation is abrupt, but surely they had talked at length about what was on Nicodemus' mind, or at least Jesus knew Nicodemus' thoughts. So Jesus explains to him, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In effect he is saying, "Nicodemus, if the approaching kingdom were a restoration of the nationalistic kingdom of Israel, your citizenship in it would be assured. But I am speaking of a spiritual kingdom. You must abandon Jewish nationalism with its hope and expectation and be proselyted into a different kingdom. You must undergo a proselyte baptism declaring your change and giving public commitment to a spiritual reign of God.

This will demand such an abrupt and complete change that it will be like a new birth. Metaphorically, it will be a new birth of the water of proselyte baptism and the working of the Spirit of God within you. You will no longer be counted as a Jew nor will your Jewishness any longer offer special blessings. Being a Jewish ruler will give you no special prerogatives in the kingdom of God."

Whereas, in the claims of national Israel, the birth of an Israelite was fully visible and could be as invisible as the wind. Even as the effects of the wind are visible, though, the affected fruits of the Spirit could be seen and attested to. It would be a circumcision of the heart.

The question "What must I do to be saved?" was not the topic of the conversation. Nicodemus was already a devout Pharisee. Although Jesus chided him for his lack of understanding and slowness in believing, he did not reprimand him for any sin or unrighteousness. If he had died the previous night, he would have become one of those under the law whom Christ redeemed (Gal. 4:4).

To use this metaphor to support the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins is to give it a meaning based upon later revelation on the subject. Nicodemus did not have those teaching but would understand Jesus' words in the context of his inquiry about the kingdom. He wasn't inquiring about membership in the church, either.

Years later, Paul alludes to this metaphor in speaking of our transition from any fleshly hopes to the spiritual. By means of a similar proselyte baptism. "He delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). In the birth of water and the Spirit our allegiance from the fleshly to the spiritual is committed.

And those today who are still hoping for places in a restored nationalistic kingdom of Israel should be reminded: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Nicodemus looks different in context, doesn't he? *—1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, Tx. 78130*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

With this issue we conclude 38 years of publication, counting six years of *Bible Talk* which preceded this paper. We are now prepared to announce definitely that with the January 1991 issue we begin our final two-year cycle and will cease publication of this journal with the December 1992 issue, if the Lord provides us the strength and the resources to continue for two more years. I will turn 74 the same month we send out the last issue, and 40 years is long enough to do this sort of thing. The Lord willing, Ouida and I will for a time after closing down this journal issue a newsletter to all those on our mailing list, if for no other reason to keep in touch for awhile longer. Subscribers should continue to renew, but starting next year we will post the two-year renewal rate on a pro rata basis. We are hopeful of increasing our circulation for the last two years. You can help by sending us a list of new readers at the club rate.

There were 17 of us gathered around two tables on Thanksgiving Day at our house. Most of them were Mother Pitts' children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, but she was not able to celebrate festivities with them. She now appears to be clinging to life by a thread. Ouida amazes me in that she is not only able to do all these things with such grace but to make it look easy. Two of Ouida's kin who were here, a young otorhinolaryngologist and his talented bride-to-be, are members of the Boston Church of Christ in Los Angeles, who told us their church is adding 25 members a week. They radiate joy toward each other and toward the Lord. I was up early Thanksgiving a.m., and after my daily run and a few hours of study, I thought I'd check on the company upstairs. I found the Boston couple sitting on their legs, facing each other with an open Bible between them, studying the book of Ruth. The rest were in bed! I asked the bride-to-be to give us her testimony, which was most impressive. She was riding high as an economic officer in the U.S. Embassy in Paris when she was converted by the Boston group in that city. It radically changed her life. Her parents, supposing she had been brainwashed by a cult, sought to have her deprogrammed. But she was too much for the deprogrammer, and he at last apologized, deciding she was for real. If one wonders why the Boston churches grow as they do, the answer is really simple: They believe they are to make disciples for Jesus and they work at it. The young doctor told me that making disciples is what gives meaning to life.

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible is now available to the public. It is a revision of the 1952RSV. Thirty scholars, both men and women, did the work, one being a member of the Church of Christ, a professsor at Princeton Seminary. Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews, and Eastern Orthodox all worked together on the project. Seven different publishers will issue the new Bible in various editions and sizes. While thousands of changes were made, some are especially interesting, including those that seek to correct flagrant sexist language, such as Jn. 12:32, which now reads, "And, I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself," instead of men. And Jn. 2:10 now reads,

"Everyone serves the good wine first" instead of "Every man . . ." It sometimes reverts to the old King James translation after departing from it in 1952, one significant passage being Ro. 9:5 where Paul seems to be calling Christ "the eternally blessed God." The new version agrees with the KJV that that is what Paul said. Some changes have a touch of humor, as in Ps. 50:9, where "I will accept no bull from your house" is changed to "I will not accept a bull from your house" (The *KJV* also had that one right!). And in the new version Paul was not stoned (!) but "received a stoning" (2 Cor 11:25). Gen. 1:27 now reads, "God created humankind in his own image," but there are no such changes made of Deity. God is still "our Father who is in heaven," not Father-Mother or Parent as some have urged. The committee says it is the Bible teacher who is to show that God transcends masculinity, not the Bible translator.

Dallas Seminary has published a booklet on pornography that points up the severity of this evil in our society. There are nearly 900 theaters in our nation that show X-rated films and more than 15,000 "adult" bookstores, outnumbering McDonald's restaurants. Nearly 100 pornographic films are produced each year. Extensive research indicates that pornography has a profound effect on behavior, such as the large number of sexual-assault cases it has influenced.

John O. Humbert, general minister and president of the Disciples of Christ, has issued a statement on "Who Are The Disciples?" in which he lists twelve essential identifying marks. One reads: "This church is a movement for Christian unity, our 'polar star.' The church of Jesus Christ is 'essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one'." Another says: "This church is historically a movement away from sectarian, narrow exclusivism to a spirit of open, accepting Christian charity. Our watchwords have been: 'Christians only, but not the only Christians; in essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty and in all things charity.' There is an acceptance of diversity."

In the summer issue of *Image*, a Church of Christ journal published in West Monroe, La., Jo Ann Gibbs of Escondido, Ca., has an article on fellowship in which she says, "Fellowship is banqueting with our friends in the church. This is good. Or it is inviting into our homes the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, who cannot return the favor. This is better."

READER'S EXCHANGE

I guess when you and Ouida decide to "Hang it up," I will have to be content to read back issues and books I have of Carl Ketcherside and Cecil Hook, and maybe I can complete your Stone-Campbell Movement. At my age when I re-read something it seems like new material, as I forget. I am sure your retirement will not be dull. —*Alvin C. Keen, Topeka, Ks.*

I can't tell you how much I enjoy *Restoration Review.* I have been a "free" Christian for about three years. What a blessing! Cecil Hook's book *Free In Christ* was the most enlightening thing I had ever read. It was so helpful, and then I was introduced to your publication. I'm so thankful for men like you who persevered until younger people had time to learn of your writings and devotion to God and realize that we weren't disrespectful radicals, but that learned men of God saw the same kind of God that we see. Not harsh and rigid but loving and patient. I'm so grateful to know God as I do now, and I long to know him more deeply every day and to serve Him as He deserves to be served. —*V. Kay Daughtry, Rockford, Il.*

I continue to try to learn to be less judgmental without being complacent, as if to believe everything people say. I don't even believe many of the things I have believed in the past. I hope to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to learn to be comfortable among all those who call themselves Christians. I hope I will always be able to allow Jesus Christ to be the judge. —*Frankie Shanks, 2710 Crestwood Dr., Poplar Bluff, Mo. 63901*

(This sister issues a neat newsletter from her home and says things that women can probably say better. You might want to write to her and ask to be placed on her mailing list. —*Ed.*

The people who heard you in India remember you. You gave us new zeal to work for the glory of the Lord. I like your articles very much. I give them to others to read. We are freely giving you Salam, which is an Arabic word meaning greeting. The Hindi word is Namaskar, but people frequently use Salam, especially Christians. May the Grace of the heavenly Father enhance you in the strength of the Lord. —*Lawrence Lazarus, Kanpur, India*

I am researching a book on early Christianity in Iberia (Hispania). There is much to sift through. I contend that Roman Catholicism became the official religion of Spain/ Portugal during the reconquest of the Moors, 711-1492 B.C. That which was planted here earlier was not Roman Catholic and had much to offer in terms of the gospel preached first in Jerusalem and then to the extremities of the Roman Empire —*Dick Robison, Carcavelos, Portugal*

I talked with Cecil Hook and he told me that at the Church of Christ he attends he is a member of the "helloship." Isn't that great? Believe me, the folk at that church have no idea who walks among them. September is a wonderful month. *Restoration Review* begins again! —*Kathy Wyler, Kerrville, Tx.*

(When I think of people like Cecil Hook not being appreciated at their own church, I remember a point made by Immanuel Kant, the great German philosopher. It is much more important that one *deserves* to be appreciated than that he *is* appreciated, he observed. — *Ed.*)

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BOOK NOTES

With this issue we complete the theme we have followed the past two years, The Hope of the Believer. These two years, 1989-90, will be bound into an attractive book of 400 pages under that title with an introduction, index, and dust jacket. It will match the previous volumes, which are ideal as a permanent addition to your library. The new bound volume should be ready by early spring. The price will be $14.00 postpaid. You should place your order now, though you need send no money. We will enclose an invoice when we ship you the book.

Another of our bound volumes, the one for 1979-80, is no longer available, but we still have six volumes available, dating from 1977 through 1988, except for 1979-80. You can get all six for $58.00 postpaid. If you have not seen how attractive and useful these are, you might order our last one for 1987 -88, entitled *The Sense of Scripture*: *Principles of Interpretation* at $14.00 postpaid.

We will send you 15 back issues of this journal, selected at random by us, for only $4.00, or 25 copies for $6.00, postpaid. This is a good way for newer readers to sample what we have been saying through the years.

We are pleased that so many have read *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* by Leroy Garrett, and that it continues to be commended as both interesting and informative. You may receive a copy from us in one of two ways: Order it at $21.95 postpaid or receive a bonus copy by sending us a club of seven subs at $4.00 each (total of $28.(0). But you must request the book. This is a good way to get the history book, perhaps for a gift, and also help us increase our circulation for our last two years.

Edward Fudge's *The Fire That Consumes* has been described as "One of the most important books produced by conservative evangelicals in this century," and this is because it exposes as wrong the traditional view that final punishment in hell is unending. It takes the position that the fire of hell consumes the wicked, that the wages of sin is death. You will be impressed! We will send you a copy for $23.50 postpaid.

A few months back we advertised two books by David H. C. Read, who is always worth reading, namely *This Grace Given* and *Grace Thus Far,* which Ouida and I read with delight. They are out of print. We got an armful from the publisher as they went out of print and offered both of them for $8.95 postpaid, which is half price. We ran out and had to return checks. Now the publisher sends us another fistful that he found on some back shelf. We offer them at the same price while they last.

A delightful book that we like to sell since it opens up the subject of the woman's place in the church is *Call Me Blessed* by Faith Martin. It provides new insights into a troubling question and it is eminently biblical. $8.95 postpaid.

We at last have assurance from College Press that Carl Ketcherside's *Pilgrimage of Joy* will be published, perhaps by spring. Those who have ordered the book are listed in our computer and will receive it as soon as it is available. The pre-publication price is still $15.00 postpaid. We appreciate your placing your order in advance in that there is a cash flow problem in getting out this particular book.

John Fogarty's *Countdown for Unity,* published in 1962, makes interesting reading in view of what has happened in Eastern Europe, for he dealt with unity as a global possibility and in reference to what might happen to Communism and Catholicism. But his call for unity is in the person of Christ. It is a remarkable book out of the 1960's by a Church of Christ missionary. It is out of print but we have access to a few "attic" copies. *Only* $4.50 postpaid.

Subscription Rates: $6.00 per year or two years for $10.00. In clubs of three or more (sent to separate addresses by us) $4.00 per name per year. Foreign: $8.00 yr.

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